

**Claims**

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I claim as my invention:

1. A real-time inventory management system comprising:
  - a database, for storing inventory information;
  - a communication interface, for providing access to said database, said interface communicating between a server and a client;
  - a server, for providing access to system accessible data, and for performing business logic on such data; and,
  - a client, for providing a user interface to the system.
2. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said server is comprised of a web server.
3. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said client is comprised of a web browser.
4. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, further comprising a means of wireless communications between a client and a server.
5. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said client is comprised of a combination of a web browser and custom software for real-time inventory display.
6. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said client is comprised of a combination of a web browser and custom software for real-time inventory monitoring.
7. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said client is comprised of a combination of a web browser and custom software for real-time inventory control.

8. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said client is comprised of a combination of a web browser and custom software for real-time inventory display, monitoring, and control.
9. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said client includes a device capable of reading container labels.
10. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 9, in which said client includes a barcode scanner.
11. The real-time inventory management system of Claim 1, in which said client periodically receives or requests inventory updates from said server.
12. A method of real-time inventory management, comprising the steps of:
  - recording orders and order properties, including quantities ordered, date ordered, anticipated delivery time, and anticipated delivery date in an inventory database;
  - recording any new or returned inventory arrivals, and incrementing corresponding on-hand inventory entries;
  - receiving purchase requests and placing corresponding inventory on reserve;
  - calculating inventory quantities available for delivery as a difference between quantity on-hand and quantity on reserve.
  - decrementing both reserve and inventory totals upon shipment; and
  - providing user-appropriate inventory information when requested.
13. The real-time inventory management method of Claim 12, in which said new inventory orders are entered through an accounting system.
14. The real-time inventory management method of Claim 13, wherein said accounting system automatically updates an inventory database.

15. The real-time inventory management method of Claim 12, in which electronically readable codes corresponding to inventory items are read by a client as items are received or shipped.
  16. The real-time inventory management method of Claim 15, in which said electronically readable codes are Universal Product Code (UPC) codes.
  17. The real-time inventory management method of Claim 12, in which said user-appropriate inventory information is displayed on a client.